

MATHER, OTIS M.

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SPEECHES

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# Speeches Honoring Abraham Lincoln

Otis M. Mather

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OTIS M. MATHER  
ATTORNEY AT LAW  
HODGENVILLE, KY.

August 6, 1931.

Mr. Howard K. Terry,

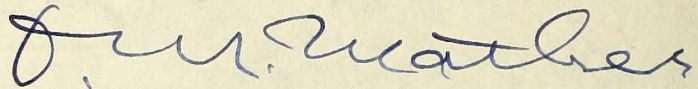
Bustleton, Philadelphia, Pa.

Dear Sir:

I have your letter of the 4th inst.

I do not think the address on Nancy Hanks Lincoln which I delivered at Lincoln City, Ind., on July 13, 1931, was published in full. I am pleased to send you a carbon copy.

Very truly yours,



P.S.--As Abraham Lincoln left this part of the country when he was under eight years of age, no one is living who remembers him as a resident of LaRue County. I know of two or three who saw him after he became President. O.M.M.



Nancy Hawks Linnell

(P. O. N. Nichols -  
July, 1830)



NANCY HANKS LINCOLN

by O.M.Mather.



## NANCY HANKS LINCOLN

(Address by O.M.Mather, of Hodgenville, Ky., at annual meeting of the Boonville Press Club, at Nancy Hanks Park, Lincoln City, Indiana, July 13, 1930.)

As we are gathered here to-day at the consecrated spot where rest the mortal remains of Nancy Hanks Lincoln, it is proper that we call to mind some of the events of her brief life upon earth and endeavor to form some estimate of her sphere of action and her character.

The span of her life was scarcely more than a third of a century.

The undisputed facts and dates in the life of Nancy Hanks Lincoln are few. That she was born in the state of Virginia is accepted by all as true; though as to the date and county of her birth historians disagree. The year 1784 is somewhat indefinitely accepted by good authority as the time of her birth. As stated on the stone at her grave, she died on the fifth day of October, 1818. Within this span of approximately thirty-four years were embraced all her growth, development, joy, labor and sorrow. The Saviour of men and the mother of the Saviour of a people were almost of the same age when they were called from the earth. Each of them died at an age when the ordinary man is just beginning his career.

The mother of Nancy Hanks was Lucy Hanks, but who her father was, scholarship has been unable to determine with certainty. The time of her arrival in Kentucky is likewise uncertain, as is also the place where she made her home when she was first brought to that State. It is said <sup>by an</sup> ~~upon~~ excellent authority that she probably came to Kentucky in company with her mother some time between 1785 and 1789. It is highly probable that her first home



in Kentucky was With her maternal grandfather, Joseph Hanks, whose farm was on the Rolling Fork River, in Nelson County, just across the stream from Hardin (later LaRue) County, and about twelve miles <sup>North</sup> Eastwardly from the Sinking Spring Farm where Abraham Lincoln was born.

In her young womanhood, and possibly down to the time of her marriage to Thomas Lincoln, on June 12, 1806, the permanent home of Nancy Hanks, so far as she could be said to have one, was with her aunt, Elizabeth Hanks Sparrow, and her husband, Thomas Sparrow, who were married in the year 1796, and who for some <sup>time</sup> ~~years~~ prior to to the marriage of Nancy owned and lived on a farm located on the South Fork of Nolin, now in LaRue County, and distant only about two miles from the Sinking Spring Farm. It was probably in the home of Thomas Sparrow that Thomas Lincoln, then a carpenter at Elizabethtown, fifteen miles Westwardly, first courted Nancy Hanks; though, as is well known, the marriage of Thomas and Nancy occurred in Washington County, Kentucky, some fifty miles from the home of her <sup>foster</sup> ~~foster~~ parents, Elizabeth and Thomas Sparrow, and sixty miles from Elizabethtown, the home of the bridegroom.

Immediately after the wedding, the young couple went to Elizabethtown to reside, the husband then being twenty-eight years of age, and the wife, according to accepted authority, twenty-two. I have in my possession an exact copy which I have made from an old ledger kept by a firm of Elizabethtown merchants, showing many charges for articles purchased by Thomas Lincoln immediately before and immediately after his marriage—the last charge before the wedding being 7 shillings and 6 pence for "sundries", on June 4, 1806; and the first charge after the wedding being 7



shillings and 3 pence, also for "sundries", on June 16, 1806. On May 21 and 22, only three weeks before the wedding, the account of Thomas Lincoln, on which he then had a goodly sum to his credit, was charged with 38 pounds, 1 shilling and 8 pence, for sundries—\$190.00 in American money—not an inconsiderable sum for a wedding outfit even at this day.

On February 10, 1807, Sarah, the first child of Thomas and Nancy Hanks Lincoln, was born, at Elizabethtown, Kentucky. From the fact that Thomas Lincoln's account with the store at Elizabethtown continued until June 3, 1808, and then suddenly stopped, as well as from accepted tradition, it is inferred that at about this time he and his wife and baby daughter removed to the vicinity of the Sinking Spring Farm, some fourteen miles ~~Eastwardly~~ <sup>Eastwardly</sup> from Elizabethtown—though, as LaRue County was not cut off from Hardin County until the year 1843, they were still in Hardin County. Thomas Lincoln purchased this farm, then containing three hundred acres, from his future brother-in-law, Isaac Bush, in December, 1808, as shown by records on file in Hardin County, and beyond all question was living on it when his second child, Abraham Lincoln, was born, February 12, 1809. At some date not later than June, 1811, the Lincoln family apparently abandoned the Sinking Spring Farm, which Thomas later suffered to be sold for a small purchase money debt due from a former owner, and located on a tract of thirty acres in the beautiful little valley of Knob Creek, about ~~twelve~~ <sup>nine</sup> miles Eastwardly from the place where Abraham Lincoln was born, but still within the boundary of the present County of LaRue. On this Knob Creek farm the third and last child of Thomas and Nancy Lincoln



On February 12, 1809, James Lincoln, son of Thomas and Hannah Lincoln, was born at Elizabethtown, Kentucky. Thomas Lincoln, on which he then had a considerable credit, was at that time with 25 pounds, 1 shilling and 6 pence, for a wedding present of 150.00 in American money - not an inconsiderable sum for a wedding present at that time.

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was born, and was given his father's name, Thomas; and here also he died. ~~The~~ place of burial of little Thomas is not known, but it is by no means improbable that this infant brother of the President rests in the neglected burial ground of Little Mount Church, in LaRue County, three miles East from Hodgenville, of which <sup>congregation</sup> Thomas Lincoln and his wife, Nancy, are believed to have been members at the time of their removal to Indiana.

After his nomination for the Presidency, Abraham Lincoln wrote to Samuel Hayscraft, of Elizabethtown, Kentucky-"My earliest recollections are of the Knob Creek place." On this Knob Creek farm, in a log cabin as humble as that in which the President was born, though on more fertile land and ~~in the midst of the~~ <sup>surrounded by the</sup> ~~wooded heights~~ <sup>beautiful scenery</sup> of Muldraugh Hill, the Lincoln family remained for more than five years, until about the end of the month of November, 1816, when the hundred-mile journey down the Ohio and to this spot where we now stand, was begun. The hardships of the new and then wild country were too great for the young mother, already worn and weary, and within two years from the time she left her Knob Creek home in Kentucky her remains were laid in the grave at the summit of this beautiful knoll, where to-day we gather to honor her memory. How little is <sup>contemporary</sup> ~~left of tangible proof that she ever lived~~ <sup>the record of her marriage</sup> ~~a few deeds of conveyance to which her name is signed by Mary~~ <sup>and then later</sup> ~~record book of the Little Pigeon Church~~; a name and a date on the stone before us. Who knows of a trinket she ever possessed, of a ring that even circled her finger, of a letter or a line to which her name is subscribed? ~~But yet her praises are heard through all the Nations, for she gave to earth one of the greatest among~~



~~The salvation of man, how that one humble life could have been so  
 blessed and so blessed is a mystery which is far beyond man's  
 ken  
 to understand.~~

As we glance back through the misty years, the face and form and the characteristics of Nancy Hanks Lincoln are seen in a dim and uncertain light. Perhaps she spent more years of her life within the present boundary of the little county in which I live than in any other locality. At least, a number of her most active years were passed in Laue County, and here, too, doubtless <sup>she</sup> had her greatest sorrow, in the death of her little son, over whose unmarked grave she must have shed tears as she <sup>turned her face</sup> ~~was finally~~ <sup>springing</sup> from her last Kentucky home. Few of her relatives remained in that part of Hardin County which is now Laue, after Nancy followed the tide of immigration to the new State of Indiana; and memory of her had largely faded from the minds of the people of Laue County when her son attained National prominence. However, <sup>some</sup> ~~a few~~ persons of that County who survived until the Civil War did remember Nancy Hanks Lincoln and her husband and children. Through ~~and~~ these old survivors and their descendants I have heard traditions which I believe to be largely true and which I have never seen in print. In order to make some slight contribution to the meager knowledge which the world has of the woman in whose honor we <sup>meet</sup> ~~gather~~, I shall mention two or three of these traditions, trivial though they may seem.

The first illustrates Nancy's youthful vivacity, or as we may say, the common frailty of indiscretion. A well-known citizen of Louisville, formerly of Laue County, informs me that it is a common tradition, received by him through his mother, who died years ago at an advanced age, that one of his mother's aunts was well ac-



quainted with Nancy Hanks before she was married, and that for some time just before her marriage Nancy was <sup>staying</sup> in the home of this lady, on South Fork Creek, certainly not far from the home of Thomas Sparrow, <sup>where</sup> ~~and~~ Thomas Lincoln was a frequent visitor of Nancy's, and that the courtship became so ardent that Thomas and Nancy would make long trips <sup>together</sup> to camp meetings and such places, until finally this lady, who felt some responsibility for Nancy's welfare, informed Thomas that she disapproved of the long nocturnal absences of Nancy with him, and considered such conduct as unbecoming to unmarried people. Whether this hint resulted in Nancy's <sup>removal</sup> temporary to Washington County and later to her marriage there, instead of in her adopted home, we can only conjecture. At any rate, we may understand that older people looked upon the pleasures and follies of youth one hundred and twenty-five years ago in just about the same way as they are regarded in this era of automobiles.

The next tradition throws a side light on life of hardship and penury to which Nancy and her family seem to have been subjected after removal to the <sup>boundary of the</sup> present county of Lake, and after the comparative affluence of the head of the family as indicated by transactions with merchants at Elizabethtown.

Alexander McDougall was a pioneer Baptist preacher and the owner of a large farm and comfortable home, which were located about four miles East of the Sinking Spring Farm and some five or six miles Southwardly from the Knob Creek place, which was Thomas Lincoln's last home in Kentucky. One of McDougall's grandsons, who recently died, and who would be eighty years of age if now living, repeatedly informed me that <sup>it was</sup> commonly said among the older members of the McDougall family that Nancy Hanks Lincoln often came to his



grandfather's home on foot for the purpose of doing the laundry work for the family.

The next and the final story which I shall relate shows the esteem in which Nancy Hanks Lincoln was held by one of her nearest neighbors and most intimate acquaintances while the Lincoln family lived on the Sinking Spring Farm. This goes far to contradict and correct ~~the~~ ugly slanders which were engendered by the Civil War.

Margaret LaRue Walters, familiarly known as "Peggy" Walters, who was my own father's maternal grandmother, was a daughter of John LaRue, for whom LaRue County was named. She was born December 11, 1799, and at the early age of fifteen, in the year 1804, married Conrad Walters, and at once settled with her husband on his farm, lying between the Sinking Spring Farm and the old South Fork Church. Her home was about a mile directly South of the log cabin in which Abraham Lincoln was born. It is a neighborhood tradition that "Peggy" <sup>who,</sup> though younger than Nancy Hanks Lincoln, was married earlier and was already the mother of at least two children, was present and assisted at the time of the birth of Abraham Lincoln. While there may be a question as to whether she actually performed services on that occasion which would be quasi-professional, there can be little doubt that she, as well as other neighbor women, visited and ministered, as was the custom in the early days, in the Lincoln home, when the birth of the boy required aid for the mother. Her recollections of the mother and the child were distinct until the day of her death, which occurred on October 26, 1864. A short time before her death, while the war was at its height, she visited at the home of Richard



8.

Greal, who was then the owner of the Sinking Spring Farm, and whose home was near by, and in company with members of the Greal family she went to the spring and pointed out the exact site of the Lincoln cabin, which had been removed from its original location more than twenty years before. On this occasion mention was made in her presence of the current malignant gossip that Thomas Lincoln was not the father of Abraham Lincoln. ~~Two~~ of Richard Greal's children <sup>as unquestioned assets</sup> have borne witness to the fact that when Peggy Walters heard the suggestion of this slander she said: I do not believe it. I knew Nancy Lincoln well, and she was a good woman. "What higher tribute could one woman have paid to another? As we read upon the stone before us the simple ~~record of her death~~ <sup>line</sup> "Died October 5, 1818", let us ~~mentally~~ <sup>fitting</sup> add the following ~~well-deserved~~ words:-

"She was a good woman - <sup>a</sup> the Mother of the Man of the Ages." "  
Like she received on earth - much she gave."

7/5/30



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